



National Council for Japanese American Redress

925 West Diversey Parkway, Chicago, Illinois 60614

November 11, 1980

Dear Friends,

This is a moment of truth.

It is a moment of fear and trembling.

The symbol I fall back upon is that of the *Forty-seven Ronin. Ronin were samurai without masters. The Forty-seven Ronin obtained justice by a collective act of self-sacrifice. A thousand dollars is not self-sacrifice, but it may feel like it for most of us. And, too, we are leaderless. Those who command broad allegiances within the Japanese-American community are simply not there when it comes to redress.

The JACL, with its 27,000 members, is behaving in a strange way. No one seems to know where they stand on redress. They passed a set of guidelines on August 1, 1980 and have yet to publish these in their newspaper, The Pacific Citizen. They nominated a list of people for the Study Commission and kept their list a secret until just this past week. And we've learned that they didn't even bother to ask all the people on the list if they would serve. James Reston, one of the nominees, didn't know anything about the Commission, hadn't been asked, and would not serve if asked.

The Japanese-American members of Congress are good at using the term "redress" but careful to avoid any commitment to the principle implicit in the term. Their latest position, I have on good authority, is simply "Forget it for the Reagan administration." They are skilled politically but void in redress leadership. Religious leaders are curiously out of character by seeming reluctant to speak publicly about redress, with one or two exceptions.

So, we are leaderless Ronin. But we can still act without leaders. We simply have to find strength within ourselves to make the tough decision, say to ourselves, "This is the time to act." We make it happen if we have the will.

For our part, we intend to be as responsible as we can about the money and the decision. We will proceed only if we can see our way clear to the finish. If we cannot proceed, we will refund all the money. We are working at establishing a contingency plan for shortfall in receipts so we will not have to stop.

Aiko and Jack Herzig have exhumed thousands of pages from the National Archives. The stuff is really dynamite. Most of know quite a bit about the stratagem of E.O.9066, whereby it would allow the military to exclude any and all persons without racial bias from military zones and then allow all but the Japs to return. It was a method to circumvent the Constitution. But I was astounded to read a set of papers

which disclosed proposed legislation to have Congress suspend the Writ of Habeas Corpus. This was in response to Mitsuye Endo's application for the writ. The Judge Advocate General of the Army writes a learned and intelligent argument in support of such drastic action. And then you get to the punch line rationale which characterizes us as "the wily enemy."

Then I've read about the 258 cases of individual exclusion (as of August, 1943). These were non-Japanese and from the Eastern and Southern Defense Commands, as well as the Western. How reasonable, by contrast to our mass exclusion, these individual cases seemed to proceed. There were hearings. There was paid transportation to a new location of your choice. There was no detention. Yet, despite this reasonableness, the Justice Dept. refused to prosecute violators of individual exclusion orders on the grounds that they had violated the constitutional guarantee of due process! And the Army, significantly, was intimidated enough to refuse to go in and force violators out at gun point.

The enclosed postcard is a simple means people can use to obtain verification of their internment dates. The form on the card has been approved by the National Archives as sufficient to obtain verification. Yuriko and I have both tried them out and they work. The further purpose of this verification is its use in obtaining Social Security credits if or when retired. If you were 18 or older in the period of your internment, Social Security credits will be granted. We'll have more information on this as we learn more.

The other use for this verification is just in case we win our lawsuit!

Peace,

William Hohri

William Hohri

ENC: Article from Pacific Citizen, 4 April 1969

CC: Congressman James O. Gorman